

Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2004
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe,
log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org
and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org
and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to
subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the
following sites:

<http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm>
<http://www.icwhen.com/aone/>
<http://almag.atari.org>
Now available:
<http://www.atarinews.org>

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
<http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/>

=~==~==

~ Internet Turns 35! ~ People Are Talking! ~ E-Mail Blackhole?
~ New iMac Is Released! ~ Video Games Sales Slow ~ GBA Price Cut!
~ MSN Music Falls Short! ~ Hurricane Frances! ~ Astro Boy Debuts!

~

~ Acclaim Goes Chapter 7 ~

-* Napster Launches Music-To-Go *-
-* Microsoft Warns On Spyware's Impact *-
-* California Schools Warned of Identity Theft *-

=~==~==

->From the Editor's Keyboard
"*****"

"Saying it like it is!"

What a great week it's been. The weather was cooperative, and basically "cool" all week. This may change over the next few days, starting off this weekend in the southeastern part of the country. Yep, another major hurricane is knocking on our door. I don't know how people enjoy living down south, but I guess they probably feel similar views for those of us living in the northeast.

It's been a quiet week around here. We got some minor projects done around the house, and a few more planned. Imagine, Labor Day weekend is upon us already. I can't believe that the summer is winding down so soon. We'll probably be closing up the pool this weekend. Maybe a few more small projects around the house, as well. It's great to have some time to get a few tasks done, with plenty of time to still relax.

Well, I don't have much to say this week. Being in vacation mode doesn't lend much to thinking about intriguing topics. It's also been a quiet week in the news, as well. Regardless, let's get down to it.

Until next time...

=~==~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and Mother Nature has taken to dope-smacking the east coast yet again. Another hurricane is taking aim at our shores. This one is... well, huge. It's another instance of nature showing us that no matter how much we like to think that we've progressed, the world on which we reside is still more than capable of sending us scurrying with no more than the ancient, basic elements of water and wind.

True, the sheer quantity and energy held within these 'elements' is staggering, but it's the scale, rather than the energy that amazes me. The storm system known as Frances is incredibly large. Seen from space,

it's an awesome storm that takes up an appreciable portion of the field of view. I saw a picture of it taken from the International Space Station, and I was in shock. I hope and pray that this puppy... against all predictions... misses us completely. It ain't gonna happen, but I can hope. This is one mean dog.

Getting back to the size of this thing... it's breath-taking. It's awe-inspiring and, at the same time frightening. Things like this are one reason that I laugh at environmentalists who preach the need to "save the planet".

Let's face it, friends and neighbors, no matter what we do, no matter how much pollution we kick up into the air, no matter what we poison the oceans with, no matter how much nuclear waste we stash away in Yucca Mountain, Earth will continue to be. WE are the ones we need to save. Because although we may not survive our own short-sightedness, the Earth surely would. And when there was nothing left of us but dust... no trace of anything that we had managed to create in the past uncouneted millennia, the Earth herself would settle back to her own rhythm and start anew as if we had never existed.

It may sound like I'm getting a bit spacier than normal, but think about it... The Earth has been here for the past 4 billion years or so. Anatomically modern humans have been here for somewhere (depending on who you ask) for no more than 30 thousand years. And it's only been in the last hundred and a half years that we've harnessed electricity and the power of the atom. Mother Nature, on the other hand, has had all the control she needs over these things for eons.

And within the next week or so, we'll get Mother Nature's report on how much more damage we've managed to do to ourselves in the past year. The "Ozone Hole" is about to open up over Antarctica. We'll see just how ticked off Mother Nature is at us this time around.

Well, enough of all this. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
=====

Josh Renaud posts this about a BBS system:

"The Grove Online has risen from the ashes of the early 1990s and been reborn in emulation. It's the first-ever telnettable Atari ST BBS.

Some of you may have heard about it... It's been in operation a couple years now. It still boggles my mind that this is POSSIBLE!

The Grove Online runs BBS Express! software and has tons of games available, including Assassin, Galactic Empire, Final Frontier, and many more.

telnet://shadow.skeleton.org "

Greg Goodwin tells Josh:

"This is awesome news! I will add you to the BBSmates list if you

haven't been added already.

And for those that would like to check out the BBS's of Dallas, TX, there are three telnet BBS's here...

<http://jybolac.atari.org>

[I] Hope to get a BBS (Atari) going soon myself!"

Mark Duckworth tells Josh:

"Actually, that connects me to a freebsd login ;-) Maybe you need to specify a port number for us to connect to.

Further, I was the proprietor of the very first telnettable Atari BBS which was running Octopus BBS on an Atari TT030. And there are other Atari related Telnet BBS's up and running, but not authentically running on a real Atari.

The Atari-source.com BBS is down for now because Octopus is still under development but I intend to bring it back up when I can more properly configure it.

It was more a proof of concept and an educational experience in porting an established BBS package to function as a telnet server.

Just like to set the record straight."

Josh tells Mark:

"My mistake... Use the same telnet address, but login as "bbs" at the prompt.

Well, then surely The Grove Online qualifies as the first "Atari telnet BBS running in emulation. <grin>

The best place is on the message base of the BBS itself... The sysop there wrote his own code to connect the Atari in emulation to the telnet port of his unix box.

By the way - I neglected to mention in my original message that at the login prompt, you need to type "bbs" which will invoke the BBS."

As a side note, this system looks like what we've been running the AtariNews.Org chat on for several years now. I've often said that one of these days I was going to read up on it and configure the rest of the BBS system, but I've never gotten around to it.

-jm

Sam F. asks for help with his new CT60:

"I finally received my CT60!!!!!!!!!! Yay!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Now I'm nervous!!!

Anyhow, I look over the CT60 and the thing that really jumped out at me:

The fan was not attached to the heatsink in any way, and both the heatsink and fan are pretty small.

I was wondering if I could attach a heatsink and fan from a pc's cpu. The fan I speaking of has a plug which attaches to one of the power leads from a psu. And both the heatsink and fan look as though they would entirely cover the CT60's cpu.

Or should I just ask Rodolphe about it?"

Mark Duckworth tells Sam:

"This configuration is something you may not want to adjust. Although for my overclocking needs this heatsink is inefficient, the PC one didn't help but actually hurt. This heatsink is not bad at all. Since you don't have the E141J mask 060, your processor really won't generate an awful lot of heat. These things ran without heatsinks in most applications. How Rodolphe sent it should be quite adequate. As for the fan, mine seems to stay in place for the most part, and the fan Rodolphe sent is of a much higher quality than most out there."

Sam asks Mark:

"So, how do I attach the fan to the heatsink? Keeping in mind, the heatsink/fan on my CT60 is not the same as the combo I've seen on the majority of CT60 photos, to include the photo on Rodolphe's website."

Philipp Donze tells Sam:

"So, you already found Rodolphe's website? Good. Then take a look at:
http://www.czuba-tech.com/CT60/english/Fitt_nosold.htm

It contains the remark/solution to your problems:

- > There is no system to fix the fan on the heatsink. I suggest you
- > to use a double side adhesive ruban between one border of the fan
- > and the SDRAM DIMM or simply glue the fan on the heatsink.

Further I received some time ago an email from Rodolphe which "highlighted" this change of concept.

But I'm also interested in some pictures from other "2nd batch CT60 owners" who glued the fan on the heatsink."

'Coda' adds:

"Don't try to remove the heatsink off the chip. It is thermally glued. You might want to glue that fan on top of the heatsink, thats what I did - just used a bit of superglue gel. You wont be able to overclock it very much (I think 72 is the max) so you wont need a bigger hs/fan.

Load up the CT60 .cpx's and watch the temperature for a while. Probably won't go about 45 degrees (c not f)."

Wayne Martz adds his thoughts/experiences:

"It's not supposed to be attached, it slides on from the side. Use what he sent you, it's fine for now."

Well folks, it's time for me to bring it to an end for this week. Get your butt to your local Town Hall and register to vote (You thought I was going to let it slide this week, didn't you? <G>)... there're only 8 or so weeks left 'till the election, and if I remember correctly you've got to be registered 30 days in advance of the election. So get going and get ready to take part in government!

'Till next time, keep your ear to the ground and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$
[illegible]
$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
 "

Nintendo Cuts Price on Game Boy Advance

Nintendo Co. has permanently slashed prices on its Game Boy Advance SP portable video game system as the company tries to entrench its No. 1 position in the handheld game market.

Beginning Wednesday, the flip-up, color screen Game Boy Advance SP will retail for \$79, down \$20 from its price since debuting in the United States in March 2003.

Similar price cuts were being announced in Japan and Canada, said Perrin Kaplan, vice president of marketing for Nintendo of America.

Kaplan said the cut should bring the SP further into the mainstream and was unrelated to the company's impending Game Boy DS, or dual screen, which is expected in time for the holidays. No price has been set.

"This is just logical for us," Kaplan said. "Everything we have done and will always continue to do will be to maintain a stronghold on this."

Kaplan said the DS isn't a replacement for the aging SP. She said Nintendo is targeting the DS, with its wireless and touch screen capabilities, at older, more sophisticated "early-adopter" style gamers.

Kaplan said a newer SP was in the works, though she offered no details on price, specifications or a release date.

The SP was the top game player last year, with more than 20 million sold in the United States. Since 1989, some 172 million Game Boys have sold worldwide.

"It's one area that we have really owned. We see it as an area that can continue to grow," Nintendo spokeswoman Beth Llewelyn said. "Gaming has expanded to all ages, and handhelds are ready to take that on and expand too."

Along with games, third-party manufacturers have stepped in with an array of add-ons that turn the Game Boy into a digital camera, a cell phone or a video player.

Hardware makers, however, have seen declining sales so far this year. According to the NPD Group, sales of portable hardware in the first half of 2004 fell 18 percent compared to the same period a year earlier.

It's not stopping rivals, including Sony Corp., from entering the market. Next year, Sony is set to unveil its PlayStation Portable, or PSP. The thin black machine, about the size of a paperback book, plays movies and music, plus games.

Video Game Maker Acclaim Files for Bankruptcy

Video game publisher Acclaim Entertainment Inc., which has been hampered by a lack of hit titles, filed for bankruptcy liquidation on Thursday after failing to line up new financing.

Acclaim, one of the oldest brands in the industry, has been known as much for failures like "Turok: Evolution" and controversial titles like "BMX XXX" as it has for its successes in the highly competitive industry.

The company, which filed for bankruptcy to liquidate its assets under Chapter 7 of U.S. Bankruptcy Code, has also faced lawsuits from some of its top licensees, including ones from teen superstars Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen and biking legend Dave Mirra.

Acclaim is the second well-known company in the business to go bankrupt in recent times, after 3DO Co. in 2003.

It was not immediately clear what would happen to Acclaim's properties, including upcoming games like "100 Bullets" as well as new entries in the "Worms" franchise.

Rival developers are always looking to acquire popular games, and companies such as Majesco Holdings Inc., Atari Inc. and Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. may be interested in Acclaim's roster, according to Wedbush Morgan Securities Inc. analyst Michael Pachter.

But opinions differed on the value of those assets.

"Games like 'Juiced' and 'Red Star' are worth quite a bit," Pachter said. "Majesco and Take-Two have a strong distribution presence so they would be able to get them out quickly."

On the other hand, RBC Capital Markets analyst Stewart Halpern noted that with 3DO's liquidation, none of their franchises sold for much more than \$100,000.

"If that's any guide, then it doesn't seem like the asset sale story is going to be an exciting one," he said.

Acclaim attorney Jeff Friedman said a trustee has been appointed whose duties will be to sell Acclaim's assets, including several titles that are ready to market.

"(However) the games that are in the middle of development are more problematic because it is not clear that there will be money to finish those games," he said.

Friedman said at least one creditor was owed more than \$20 million but he did not know the name of that person or entity.

Acclaim in early July said it faced bankruptcy unless it could negotiate a new credit facility, reiterating that warning in late August.

"Negotiations with a proposed lender to replace the company's former primary lender, GMAC Commercial Finance (a unit of General Motors Corp., had terminated and the company's credit facility with GMAC expired on Aug. 20 and was not extended," Acclaim said in a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

RBC analyst Halpern said that while Acclaim's demise may be its own fault, other smaller developers in the \$10 billion interactive gaming industry must struggle to compete in the face of rising marketing and developing expenses.

"The numerous errors and misjudgments that Acclaim made along the way make this a company specific situation," he said. But there is no question that the cost of doing business continues to increase, making it harder for smaller companies to compete broadly.

Shares of the Glen Cove, New York-based company, which was founded in 1987, peaked at more than \$30 a share in late 1993 but last broke \$5 in mid-2002 and have traded below \$1 since last September. Over-the-counter Pink Sheets of Acclaim traded at around 2 cents on Thursday.

'Astro Boy' Makes Video Game Debut

Tetsum Atom is a butt-kicking, pint-sized hero that wants nothing more than peace between humans and robots. More than a half-century after debuting in Japanese comic books, "Astro Boy" - as he's known outside of Japan - is starring in two new video games from Sega of America Inc.

"Astro Boy: Omega Factor" for Nintendo's Game Boy Advance is an enjoyable title that pushes the little handheld game device to its limits. There's

also a mediocre PlayStation2 version, simply called "Astro Boy."

Astro Boy has appeared in many cartoons and comic books since he was created by Osamu Tezuka in 1952. The wide-eyed robot, coifed with a shiny head of slicked black hair, has a heart of gold and a childlike optimism that makes him very likable and a positive role model for kids.

Astro Boy can dole out some serious punishment when diplomacy fails. He boasts one million horsepower strength, his arms double as laser cannons, a machine gun sprouts from his back and he flies with the help of red boots that double as rockets.

The "Omega Factor" story covers Astro Boy's quest to uncover a plot to incite war between humans and robots.

The 40-plus levels have you running, jumping and flying around caverns, cities, even a futuristic Antarctica. The levels usually end in confrontations with giant "boss" monsters. It takes a full cache of weapons and plenty of finger dexterity to beat these super-sized, overpowering enemies that nearly fill the entire screen.

Between battles, there's scripted dialogue where you'll encounter a roster of friends, enemies and some characters between good and evil as the overarching story unfolds.

Meeting friend and foe is vital to boosting Astro Boy's "Omega Factor" - a sort of life force that lets him evolve his powers.

"Omega Factor" packs nicely drawn backgrounds, detailed animations and atmospheric effects on the Game Boy's diminutive color screen.

There's a trade-off, though: occasionally choppy gameplay. While dodging electrified floors and fighting robots in a steamy power plant, my Game Boy Advance SP was clearly overwhelmed as the game slowed noticeably.

After finishing "Omega Factor," I tried the PS2 version, where we finally see "Astro Boy" in three dimensions. Graphics aren't enough to help this one.

What could have been a great opportunity to let fans freely roam Metro City instead comes off as a thin ploy to sell more Astro Boy merchandise.

Without the licensed characters, you're left with a very average title: The very short game (I finished it in an afternoon) boils down to a series of increasingly tough fights.

In between, you can hunt for hidden collector cards (yawn), chat it up with the locals and smash the occasional pack of robots. You develop additional powers such as X-ray vision after beating a boss or completing some other task.

There's just nothing here that really stands out. The gameplay is average, as are the cartoonish graphics. The sound is nothing special and even the big, spectacular battles are extremely average.

Unless you're a big Astro Boy collector, I don't see any reason to plunk down \$40. The curious will probably have their fill after renting it for a few days.

"Omega Factor" is a far better deal at \$30 with its interesting story,

colorful presentation and gameplay variety.

There's a positive message within these E-rated games as Astro Boy grapples with weighty issues such as human-robot racism and the meaning of life and death in a way that should please parents and engage children. Perhaps that's Astro Boy's greatest ability.

Three and a half stars out of four for "Omega Factor," two stars out of four for the PS2 version.

TOCA Race Driver 2 Gets Its PlayStation 2 Engine Turbocharged

With TOCA Race Driver 2 set to come screeching onto PlayStation 2 on October 8th, take a circuit-side seat and grab a taste of the most motorsports ever in one game with the stunning video - now available from <http://www.codemasters.co.uk/tocaracedriver2> .

Showing just why the game is the console's Ultimate Racing Simulator, the new video's incredible looks and speed aren't rendered or enhanced. It's 100% pure and unadulterated PlayStation 2 game footage guaranteed!

Letting you loose on over 50 global racing circuits, TOCA Race Driver 2 will roar in with new and exclusive features for the PlayStation 2 edition including an additional circuit, Spain's Catalunya, and an enhanced Championship structure that allows for 99 additional car and track combinations.

There's also a super hardcore "Pro-Sim mode" if you've got what it takes. Hook the game up to a force feedback wheel, including the new 900 Logitech Driving Force Pro, and you'll be really racing!

Plus, in TOCA Race Driver 2, you start as a professional - there are no boring 'tests' to take before you can play the proper game. In fact, you'll be buckling up in top supercars from the start - your first is the awesome Ford GT!

From there, push your racing prowess through a total of 33 championships that cover a massively diverse selection of motor sports, including GT Sports Car Racing, Street Racing, Rally, DTM, V8 Supercars, Global GT Lights, Rally Cross, Formula Ford, Open Wheel Grand Prix, Classic Car Racing, Super Truck racing, Stockcar Oval Racing, Ice-Racing, Convertible Racing, and Performance Cars.

An all new and proprietary PlayStation 2 graphics engine powers TOCA Race Driver 2 along at an incredibly smooth 60 frames-per-second with absolutely no pop-up, even when the game crams up to 21 cars onto the tracks simultaneously!

Already a number one hit on Xbox and PC, the new PlayStation 2 edition of TOCA Race Driver 2: The Ultimate Racing Simulator will launch October 8th, complete with online play functionality for up to 8 players. Stay ahead of the high-speed pack and check the PlayStation 2 movie at <http://www.codemasters.co.uk/tocaracedriver2> .

Video game sales soared to a record \$18.2 billion last year, but the days of strong growth are on pause as players await a new generation of consoles in 2005 and 2006, a new study showed on Wednesday.

Recent price cuts in Europe for Microsoft's Xbox and Sony's PlayStation 2 plus new releases in reliably selling franchises such as "Grand Theft Auto," "Halo" and "Doom" are expected to boost sales in the second half of 2004.

But sales for the entire year are expected to be flat compared to 2003, at \$18.2 billion, said London-based research group Screen Digest in its annual study.

Screen Digest pointed out that the slowdown had been long anticipated as it follows the typical trend for game consoles entering their third and fourth years on store shelves.

"2003 was the peak. But the slow to stable growth for 2004 is positive. There were a lot more consoles sold in this cycle than in the past one," said Ben Keen, executive director for Screen Digest.

Over the past decade, the growth rate for video game turnover has exploded, rivalling cinema box office takings and CD sales in several major markets.

Screen Digest defined the market in its annual report as including video games for personal computers and consoles such as PlayStation 2, Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube, plus "edutainment" titles, or hybrid entertainment-education software.

Global video game sales growth in 2003 was led by Europe, and in particular Britain, Screen Digest said.

The British video game market, the third-largest in the world behind the United States and Japan, jumped almost 20 percent to \$1.88 billion. The Western European market climbed 21 percent to \$6.4 billion, the researchers said.

Screen Digest predicted global retail sales will rise a further 16 percent to \$21.1 billion by 2007.

==~==~==

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Apple's New iMac Computer Is All Display

Apple Computer unveiled, after a two-month delay, its new iMac desktop computer on Tuesday which integrates disk drives and processors into a flat display less than two inches thick.

"Now we have the world's thinnest desktop computer," Phil Schiller, head of worldwide product marketing, said in a keynote presentation at the annual Apple Expo in Paris.

Shipping from mid-September, Apple said the computer would be available in versions with a 17-inch and a 20-inch display, with a wireless keyboard and mouse.

Apple said in July the launch of the new iMac would be delayed until September. It put a dent in the share price of the company which has been at the forefront of computer innovation for decades, but whose global market share has been eroded to less than 5 percent amid competition from lower-priced PCs running on the Windows operating system from Microsoft.

Retail prices of the new iMac will start at \$1,299 for the 17-inch model, or 1,399 euros in Europe. The slightly thicker 20-inch model will cost \$1,899, or 2,049 euros.

"This is a much more affordable line (of personal computers)," Schiller told a cheering audience of Macintosh (news - web sites) users. He declined to give sales targets.

The model will take over from the current iMac, which created a buzz when launched a few years ago with its minimalist design featuring a thin display perched on a stainless steel pole above a white hemispherical base.

Sales of the iMac have slowed in recent quarters, but Apple's portable notebook computers have still been doing well.

"7.5 million iMacs have been sold over the last six years. It's time for an entirely new iMac," Schiller said.

Analysts agreed the iMac had been in need of a makeover. The new design would take less space on a desk and this would push existing Apple users to trade in their old iMac. But the new design would not be enough to convince Windows users to switch, they said.

"These devices are all about software. There's nothing here that addresses the compatibility issues," said analyst Brian Gammage at Gartner, referring to the fact that existing software running on Windows cannot be swapped to an Apple computer.

The new model, designed by the same team that developed the iPod portable music player, works on G5 microprocessors.

With the iPod, Apple broke into the consumer electronics market and has come to dominate the portable music segment where it claims 58 percent of the U.S. market for MP3 players.

Schiller also drew attention to Apple's newly developed business of selling songs online through its iTunes Music Store. Stores that were opened to German, French and British customers 10 weeks ago have already sold 5 million tracks, he said.

A fourth European iTunes store would open in October, which would give consumers in all other countries access to the catalog, in English, Schiller told Reuters in an interview.

Worldwide, Apple has sold more than 4 million iPods and sold more than 100

million songs in the United States since it was launched in April last year.

The success of iPod and iTunes, by far the most popular online music store, has pushed Apple shares up from a six-year low of \$12.92 in April 2003 to over \$35 this week.

Schiller reiterated that 49-year old Chief Executive Steve Jobs, who in the late 1990s came back to rescue the company which he had founded, was making a good recovery from cancer surgery. "He's doing great. We really look forward to Steve coming back to work in September," Schiller said.

Napster Launches Music-To-Go Service

U.S. music-downloading service Napster has launched a preview version of its Napster To Go portable music service, which incorporates Microsoft's latest digital-rights management software, Janus.

Napster To Go uses Microsoft's new Windows Media Player 10 to enable Napster subscribers to download songs to portable music players. The preview service is available at an introductory price of US\$14.95 per month. Final pricing has yet to be announced.

Microsoft's Janus digital-rights management software, which is included in Windows Media Player 10, is used to prevent copyright abuse. This means that users are allowed to download songs to their portable devices as long as they continue to pay their subscription fees to Napster.

The Napster To Go preview is free to download, but it only works with the Samsung Portable Media Center or Creative's Zen Portable Media Center. Portable media centers are a new class of device that can download all the digital entertainment that consumers store on their Windows XP-based PCs, including photos, recorded TV shows, home videos and music.

"What subscribers have to do is log on to Napster on their PC, then plug in their Portable Media Center," Napster spokesperson Dana Harris told NewsFactor. "They can then download songs to the device. Subscribers have to connect their Portable Media Centers to Napster once a month to renew their license to listen to the music on the devices."

The preview can be downloaded from a Napster link on the Windows Media Player 10 Digital Media Mall storefront.

The full version of Napster To Go will be launched later this fall. "We are the first and only company to offer a portable music service," Harris told NewsFactor.

"By the time the full service is available, I expect a lot more portable music centers to be on the market that will be compatible with Napster To Go," she said. "All the major MP3-player manufacturers, such as iRiver and Rio, will have portable music centers available."

Rivals Say Microsoft Online Music Store Falls Short

Microsoft Corp's. newly launched MSN Music download service has a long way to go to catch up with iTunes and other online services, competitors said on Thursday.

Apple Computer Inc., a longtime rival and sometimes partner on Microsoft, said that the world's largest software maker will have a tough time matching the 16 million songs downloaded every month from its iTunes music store and will be crippled by users not being able to transfer songs onto iPod portable music players.

"It is about the music, the acquiring of music and the listening of music, and how to give customers the best experience of that," said Eddy Cue, Apple's vice president of applications.

Cupertino, California-based Apple also noted that MSN Music, which launched on Wednesday, is offering only 500,000 downloadable songs, half of what iTunes currently offers. Yusuf Mehdi, vice president at Microsoft's MSN Internet division, said MSN Music would quickly grow to more than 1 million.

"It will be larger than any catalog," Mehdi said.

Microsoft is also touting that its songs will be encoded in the Windows Media format at a higher bit rate than Apple's standard format for iTunes, resulting in better sound quality.

Both offer songs at 99 cents each, although Microsoft is also offering some longer-playing songs above that price, a practice that record companies had been trying to implement. Apple has resisted industry pressure to offer songs at more than 99 cents.

Josh Bernoff, analyst at Forrester Research, said it was still too early to tell how Microsoft would stack up against Apple, noting that MSN Music launched in beta, or test mode.

"It has weaknesses that Apple has pointed out but many of them are going to get fixed," Bernoff said, "Just because Microsoft's first offering doesn't solve all problems doesn't mean that they won't be around for a long time or soak up customers."

Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft had been working for over a year to enter the online music market. The new MSN Music can be accessed from a browser as well as a new version of the Windows Media Player that also was unveiled.

Microsoft is also opening up a "Digital Media Mall" within its Windows Media Player software program for playing audio and visual content. Wal-Mart Stores Inc., which began offering music downloads in March at 88 cents each, on Thursday launched an online music store the works with Windows Media Player.

In a similar effort to expand the reach of iTunes music store, Apple introduced an affiliates program on Wednesday that allows Web site operators to link their content to Apple's downloads and earn a commission.

Seattle-based RealNetworks Inc. also weighed in on Microsoft's foray into the online music market, saying that its strategy offering both song downloads and music subscription services was the "key to the overall growth of the legal music market."

RealNetworks recently launched a promotional 49 cents per-song download campaign in conjunction with its Harmony service that allows songs downloaded from its store to be played on Apple's iPod. Apple has said that RealNetworks effectively hacked into the iPod, and it was considering legal action.

Singapore-based Creative Technology Ltd. said on Thursday it would double its Windows-friendly digital music player product line as it tries to boost its 10 percent global market share and overtake the iPod's leading 17 percent share of the market.

California Schools Warned of Identity Theft

California university officials have warned nearly 600,000 students and faculty that they might be exposed to identity theft following incidents where computer hard drives loaded with their private information were lost or hacked into.

Since January, at least 580,000 people who had personal information about them stored in university computers received warnings they might be at risk.

The latest instance of missing equipment occurred in June at California State University, San Marcos.

An auditor lost a small external hard drive for a laptop computer. Personal data, including names, addresses, Social Security numbers and other identifiers for 23,500 students, faculty and staff in the California State University system were contained on the missing hard drive.

At the University of California, San Diego, and San Diego State University, hackers broke into computers and obtained access to files of personal data for more than 500,000 current or former students, applicants, staff, faculty and alumni.

Officials from the Cal State system and UC San Diego said they have no evidence any personal data were stolen.

At the University of California, Los Angeles, a stolen laptop in June led officials to notify as many as 145,000 blood donors that their data might be in the open.

A California law requiring people be notified when they might be exposed to identity theft took effect in July 2003. Officials say that might explain the rash of notices.

"There's no reason to assume that suddenly in July 2003 all these computer security breaches started occurring," said Joanne McNabb of the Office of Privacy Protection in the California Department of Consumer Affairs. "It's just that we know about them now, when we didn't hear before."

Microsoft Warns on Spyware's Impact

Though Microsoft Corp.'s new security update package is all about protecting systems from worms, viruses and spyware, it can't do much about what's already on computers ? and that could pose a problem.

The company is warning users of the Windows XP operating system to check for spyware before downloading the free massive security update, called Service Pack 2.

Barry Goff, a group product manager at Microsoft, said some spyware could cause computers to freeze up upon installation of the update.

Spyware, which typically piggybacks with downloaded software such as file-sharing programs, tracks behavior, triggers pop-up ads and can otherwise cause problems on computers.

Programs such as Ad-Aware and SpySweeper can scour computers for spyware. Microsoft recommends that users clean their PCs of spyware and back up their data before turning on the auto update feature that automatically downloads Service Pack 2, or SP2.

People who download SP2 also may need to check whether legitimate programs, such as third-party security software, need to be updated. SP2 makes major changes, including adding a Windows Firewall to better guard computers against attack, and those changes can also cause compatibility issues with other software.

Microsoft finished work on SP2 in early August and is slowly distributing it to customers through automatic downloads, manual downloads and CDs. The company is metering out the product to avoid clogging up networks and slowing other Internet traffic ? and to monitor for any glitches.

Goff said fewer than 10 million consumers have received SP2, while several million businesses have downloaded the product. Research firm IDC estimates that about 260 million copies of Windows XP have been sold.

The Customer E-Mail Black Hole

Customer e-mail is routine, and routinely trashed, studies show. Disappearing as though swallowed by a black hole, ignored e-mails are costing companies millions as disgruntled consumers take their business elsewhere.

"The fact that 41 percent of large North American companies are simply ignoring e-mails from high-value buyers is shocking," Dr. Jon Anton, director of Benchmark Portal and Benchmark Research at Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality told NewsFactor.

The black hole catches e-mail that falls through the cracks between programs. "Retailers are not adequately addressing customer questions/inquiries submitted via e-mail, because the technology and processes are disjointed from the other CRM activities. Any time a call center agent needs to toggle among various applications, or they do not have a single view of the customer, poor customer service is likely," Rob Garf, retail analyst at AMR Research, told NewsFactor.

Although a hassle for consumers, the problem is understandable. "It's essentially the same problem we had in the 1980s with toll-free phone

numbers. Everybody loved calling in, but there were not enough agents - or sufficient technology - to handle the volume. So it is with e-mail now," says Anton.

The evolution of customer communications does show a recurring trend. From "letters, to toll-free numbers, to e-mail and on to Web chat, corporate America is always trying to catch up with demand," says Anton.

While Anton says companies are not "laggards," the perception is that companies are not exactly racing to attend to the customer.

"A shocking 41 percent of the companies did not respond at all to our surveyors' e-mail, even though a clear intention to make large purchases was indicated in the body of the e-mail. Only 39 percent of the overall sample sent an answer within 24 hours, and only 15 percent of companies sent any form of acknowledgement. Only 17 percent of the companies in the overall sample responded with an accurate and complete answer," Anton says.

Among sector-specific findings in the study, retail performed the best in responsiveness with 53 percent responding within 24 hours. Surprisingly, the financial-services and telecom companies were the least responsive, with 59 percent and 40 percent of the companies respectively sending no response at all.

There were also some surprises in the category of quality of response. The retail sector performed the best with 35 percent of the companies providing an accurate and complete answer. Telecom and high-technology manufacturing performed the worst with only 9 percent and 10 percent respectively.

"Lack of e-mail integration into the overall CRM platform often leads to an e-mail black hole, and that ultimately impacts service levels and the customer experience. It will be increasingly difficult to win those customers back. Companies cannot afford to drop the ball," says Garf.

The loss of sales and goodwill is compounded by the loss of cost-savings in operations. "Call centers are inherently ineffective. It costs between US\$8 and \$15 per call to handle a transaction or inquiry by phone, whereas it only costs a dime to a quarter to handle the same thing through the Internet," Carl Lehmann, vice president of Technical Research Services at Meta Group, told NewsFactor.

If history repeats itself, a fix is not too far off. "It took about five years to straighten out the problems with toll-free calls, and we expect about the same for e-mail. We've been through two years of growing pains, and in about three years, we'll have the problems solved," says Anton.

But that is not the only footnote in history that stands to be repeated. "E-mails are the easiest of services to outsource to countries like India once the technical issues are worked out," says Anton. "Customers will never know foreigners are answering the e-mail, since cultural nuances and language differences are not apparent like they are on the phone in call centers."

He added that customers tend to expect an answer by e-mail within 24 hours, as opposed to the expected immediate response by telephone. "Fewer agents will be needed to answer e-mail, further lowering costs," he said.

In any case, the black hole will continue to consume customer e-mail and company profits, until it turns its maw toward technical jobs and paychecks. Bottom line, it is a situation that must be reckoned with.

Web Turns 35, but Still Work in Progress

Thirty-five years after computer scientists at UCLA linked two bulky computers using a 15-foot gray cable, testing a new way for exchanging data over networks, what would ultimately become the Internet remains a work in progress.

University researchers are experimenting with ways to increase its capacity and speed. Programmers are trying to imbue Web pages with intelligence. And work is underway to re-engineer the network to reduce spam and security troubles.

All the while threats loom: Critics warn that commercial, legal and political pressures could hinder the types of innovations that made the Internet what it is today.

Stephen Crocker and Vinton Cerf were among the graduate students who joined UCLA professor Len Kleinrock in an engineering lab on Sept. 2, 1969, as bits of meaningless test data flowed silently between the two computers. By January, three other "nodes" joined the fledgling network.

Then came e-mail a few years later, a core communications protocol called TCP/IP in the late 70s, the domain name system in the 80s and the World Wide Web - now the second most popular application behind e-mail - in 1990. The Internet expanded beyond its initial military and educational domain into businesses and homes around the world.

Today, Crocker continues work on the Internet, designing better tools for collaboration. And as security chairman for the Internet's key oversight body, he is trying to defend the core addressing system from outside threats, including an attempt last year by a private search engine to grab Web surfers who mistype addresses.

He acknowledges the Internet he helped build is far from finished, and changes are in store to meet growing demands for multimedia. Network providers now make only "best efforts" at delivering data packets, and Crocker said better guarantees are needed to prevent the skips and stutters now common with video.

Cerf, now at MCI Inc., said he wished he could have designed the Internet with security built-in. Microsoft Corp., Yahoo Inc. and America Online Inc., among others, are currently trying to retrofit the network so e-mail senders can be authenticated - a way to cut down on junk messages sent using spoofed addresses.

Among Cerf's other projects: a next-generation numbering system called IPv6 to accommodate the ever-growing armies of Internet-ready wireless devices, game consoles, even dog collars. Working with NASA, Cerf is also trying to extend the network into outer space to better communicate with spacecraft.

But many features being developed today wouldn't have been possible at birth given the slower computing speeds and narrower Internet pipes, or bandwidth, Cerf said.

"With the tools we had then, we did as much as we could reasonably have done," he said.

While engineers tinker with the Internet's core framework, some university researchers looking for more speed are developing separate systems that parallel the Internet. That way, data-intensive applications like video conferencing, brain imaging and global climate research won't have to compete with e-mail and e-commerce.

Think information highway with an express lane.

Some applications are so data-intensive, they are "simply impractical to do on the current Internet," said Tracy Futhey, chairwoman of the National LambdaRail. The project offers for its members dedicated high-speed lines so data can "get from point A to point B and not have to contend with the other traffic."

LambdaRail recently completed its first optical connection from San Diego to Seattle to Pittsburgh to Jacksonville, Fla. Work on additional links is planned for next year.

Undersea explorer Robert Ballard has used another network, Internet2, to host live, interactive presentations with students and aquarium visitors from the wreck of the Titanic, which he found in 1985.

The Internet's bandwidth can carry only "lousy" video and "can't compete with looking out the window," Ballard said. But with Internet2, "high-definition zoom cameras can show them the eyelids."

Internet2, with speeds 100 times the typical broadband service at home, is now limited to selected universities, companies and institutions, but researchers expect any breakthroughs to ultimately migrate to the main Internet.

While Internet2 and LambdaRail seek to move data faster and faster, researchers with the World Wide Web Consortium are trying to make information smarter and smarter. Semantic Web is a next-generation Web designed to make more kinds of data easier for computers to locate and process.

Consider the separate teams of scientists who study genes, proteins and chemical pathways. With the Semantic Web, tags are added to information in databases describing gene and protein sequences. One group may use one scheme and another team something else; the Semantic Web could help link the two. Ultimately, software could be written to process the data and make inferences that previously required human intervention.

With the same principles, searching to buy an automobile in Massachusetts will also incorporate listings for cars in Boston.

Change doesn't come easily, however. For instance, the IPv6 numbering system was deemed an Internet standard about five years ago, but the vast majority of software and hardware today still runs on the older IPv4, which is rapidly running out of room.

And the Internet faces general resistance from old-world forces that want to preserve their current ways of doing things: Companies that value profit over greater good. Copyright holders who want to protect their music and movies. Governments that seek to censor information or spy on its citizens.

In early August, the Federal Communications Commission declared that Internet-based phone calls should be subject to the same type of law

enforcement surveillance as cell and landline phones. That means Internet service providers would have to design their systems to permit police wiretaps.

Jonathan Zittrain, a professor with Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, fears a slippery slope. As these outside pressures meddle with the Net's open architecture, he said, there's less opportunity for experimentation and for innovations like the World Wide Web, born out of an unauthorized project at a Swiss nuclear research lab.

=~::~~::~=

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.